



**31<sup>st</sup> EGOS Colloquium, July 2-4, 2015, Athens**  
**Organizations and the Examined Life: Reason, Reflexivity and Responsibility**

**Announcement of the EGOS Sub-Theme 27:**

**“DYNAMIC CAPABILITIES FOR STRATEGIC CHANGE IN PRACTICE”**

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(max. 3000 words, references and appendices included)

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## **Dynamic capabilities as practices of change**

Uncovering the sources of (sustained) competitive advantage can be regarded as the „Holy Grail“ of strategic management research (Helfat & Peteraf, 2009). In search of an explanation of adaptive firm behavior, researchers have developed the concept of dynamic capabilities as “the capacity of an organization to purposefully create, extend or modify its resource base” (Helfat et al., 2007: 4). Dynamic capabilities have taken center stage in explaining organizational change processes in certain dimensions including innovation, entrepreneurial behavior, organizational transformation or coping with crises (see e.g. Ambrosini & Bowman, 2009; Easterby-Smith et al., 2009, Vogel & Güttel 2013). The dynamic capabilities view (DCV) is designed to give a theoretical framework for specifying routinized adaptation processes as well as actors’ influences on renewal (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Teece et al., 1997; Zollo & Winter, 2002; Teece, 2007).

Firms can strive to gain or sustain competitive advantage by strategically altering their resource base by practices related to sensing, seizing and transformation (Teece, 2007), to develop practices for enabling a continuous change (e.g. Eisenhardt & Brown, 1999), to make use of the institutional embeddedness (Baum & Oliver, 1992) or to support actors with strategic impact (Gavetti, 2005; Augier & Teece, 2008; Salvato & Rerup, 2011). The individual’s ability to create new solutions in ambiguous situations becomes also an important source to overcome inertia (Foss, 2011; Leonard-Barton, 1995). Issue-selling (Dutton et al., 2001) serve as a means for leaders to shape the firm’s agenda towards the change of organizational routines, processes, and practices (Cohendet & Llerena, 2003). The manager’s decisions are embedded in an organizational culture guiding behavior of organizational members and determine what is forbidden and what is allowed (Alvesson, 2002). A look at the high failure-rate of organizational change (O’Reilly & Tushman, 2011; Sherman & Hart, 2006) reveals that coping with cultural elements seems to be a very difficult endeavor. Path-dependence research further emphasizes the firm’s struggle of overcoming lock-in situations (Sydow et al., 2009). Within this corridor of opportunities and threats it is the concrete configuration of organizational and individual activities that defines the organizational capability for renewal (Sprafke et al. 2012) and therefore the firm’s ability to respond to challenges as well as economic pressure.

## **Aim of the sub-theme**

With respect to future research it is an important question how exactly the organizational and the individual level interact and reflect the broader institutional environment in order to practice change. Further questions related to practices of change are the influencing factors of dynamic capabilities as well as their limitations and restrictions for dealing with unexpected situations (e.g. the financial meltdown 2007). It is the aim of this sub-theme to bridge research from strategic management with organization studies and to give emphasize to practices of strategic change reflecting institutional, organizational and individual actors’ influences and interactions from a dynamic capability perspective.

We invite and encourage contributions on a theoretical-conceptual and an empirical basis that try to uncover dynamic capabilities for practicing change in general and/or that specify context factors in this regard, e.g. that refer to regional or organizational crises, challenges of innovation, globalization etc. All kinds of empirical settings, e.g. longitudinal studies, process studies, secondary data analyses, case studies, actor-centered measurements etc. are more than appreciated. We want to provide a home for scholars who bridge organization and strategy research.

Thus, questions as to (1) how strategic decisions constitute dynamic capabilities, (2) how dynamic capabilities actually lead to change in the organization, (3) how firms generate resilience and strategic flexibility to deal with external turbulences, (4) how different levels (regional-institutional, organizational team, individual) interact in facilitating change, (5) how individuals shape the firm’s change agenda by issue-selling activities to overcome inertia, or (6) how defensive routines or cultural elements restrict the individual’s influence towards change.

**The Convenors**

**Wolfgang H. Güttel** is Professor of Human Resource and Change Management at the Johannes Kepler University Linz (AUT). Previously, he was professor at the Universities of Kassel (GER) and Hamburg (GER) and Research Fellow at the Universities of Liverpool (UK) and Padua (ITA). His main research interests are dynamic capabilities, ambidexterity (the relationship between exploratory and exploitative learning) and replication.

**Patrick Cohendet** is Professor of Economics at HEC Montréal business school in Canada. He was before professor at the University of Strasbourg, France. His research interests include Economics of Innovation, Technology Management, Knowledge Management, Theory of the firm, and Economics of creativity.

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